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ABSTRACT

The paper reviews research that describes good teaching in several cultures, focusing on teachers and teaching in China, England, Israel, Norway, and the United States. A root metaphor is used to describe good teaching in each culture. In China, good teacher are described as virtuosos because their art is teaching, and there is very little variation in teaching methods. In England, the good teacher is a superman who needs to have exceptional personal qualities, super command of pedagogical skill, exceptional subject matter background, and faultless conduct. Good teachers in the United States are described as skilled performers because they are artists who base their art on solid craft knowledge and bold imagination, and because they are improvisors on stage, sensitive to the responses of their audiences. The good teacher in Israel is a creator of a nation with the responsibility for transmitting cultural knowledge to the younger generation. Good teachers in Norway are looked upon as caregivers and interpreters of texts. They are expected to be good colleagues who are caring, and who have honed pedagogical skills and subject matter expertise. The research shows that various elements of good teaching are accepted as qualities in one culture but as liabilities in another. (SM)

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CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF THE GOOD TEACHER

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Introduction

In 1990, Life Magazine published an illustrated article titled "Magical teachers." Two of the magazine's journalists visited several classrooms of "good teachers." They visited Jeanne Wirtzer who teaches severely handicapped students housekeeping and cooking, also the "dragon lady" Mavel Rodriguez, who teaches classical ballet. They visited a science classroom, where the teacher, Allan Stawicki, dressed as a clown, performed magical tricks as part of his science teaching. They also visited a former teacher turned real estate agent who had impressed one of the magazine's journalists way back in high school. Mr. Whitson was the best teacher the author had had in his entire school career. The author remembered vividly how Mr. Whitson lectured his class about a non existing creature he called "cattywampus" and then failed the whole class on a quiz on this animal because it did not exist. At an elementary school, Mr. Burchfield is down on his knees with a gerbil in his hands. He is surrounded by his students some of whom are holding and stroking animals. Marian Peiffer, a social studies teacher, has her class to TV news and documentaries, and a team of teachers at Andover High School have turned their classes over to students.

The authors of the Life Magazine article are all Americans and they describe American classrooms. What prompted us in writing this paper is that some of the teachers described would not necessarily be called "good teachers" in Norway or Israel, or for that matter in China. "Goodness" in teaching, we feel, is culturally bound, as the Life Magazine article reflects. But, then, the skeptic can say, since the article was written by informed lay people, descriptions of "goodness" would surely reflect American culture. Researchers, it is argued, are less culturally bound. We feel that this is not so. Researchers and their products are culturally bound as well. What makes their case worth discussing here is that their work travels cross cultures and influences researchers and scholars working in a different cultural context.

In this paper we draw on research based literature describing "goodness" in teaching in several cultures. The studies we refer to are different in scope and their empirical foundation varies. Yet, they have one important issue in common, they describe what good teachers do, or should do. Drawing on published and unpublished studies, we describe "the good teacher" as seen by researchers and practitioners studying teachers and teaching in China, England, Israel, Norway and USA. We have tried when possible to include empirical studies of good teachers by leading researchers or practitioners in the field.

Because the descriptions are culturally embedded they do not cover parallel units of analysis, making cross cultural studies difficult. We feel a description of a good teacher should include as units of analysis those aspects of goodness in teaching that people in a give culture consider relevant. We do not want to impose one culture's categories upon another. That is why our portraits of good teachers are uneven. Furthermore, our own descriptions of good teachers in other cultures are culturally biased as well. We are primarily interested in understanding the portraits of the good teacher from our own cultures, Norway and Israel, and comparing them with less detailed portraits from other cultures. There is an old Viking saying that the best way to know your own home is to travel abroad. Our primary aim is to better understand our own conceptions of the good teacher and good teaching. We also feel that our professional and cross cultural background helps in these descriptions, since between us, we have visited, lived and/or worked in all the cultures we include in this paper.

We have selected a root metaphor for describing the good teacher in each culture. The root metaphor is a useful tool for this purpose because it provides a framework for organizing information in the bewildering and conflicting views on teachers and teaching. The root metaphor functions by constraining the kinds of philosophical or scientific models that are used to observe, classify, and analysis phenomena, and the kinds of questions asked in the course of inquiry.

The Good Teacher as a Virtuoso

Lynn Paine (1990), herself an American, has done extensive fieldwork in China studying teaching and teacher education. She has chosen to metaphor of **virtuoso** to describe the good teacher in Chinese culture.

> The model for teachers in China is that of the virtuoso. Their art is teaching. It is through the combination of their accomplishment of the necessary knowledge of their subject and some personal teaching aesthetic that they can achieve excellence. The virtuoso teacher is one who has so mastered the technical knowledge of the text that she or he is able to transcend it, adding a piece of one's self, one's own interpretation, in organizing the presentation, communicating it (transmitting the knowledge), and rendering it understandable for the audience. This is a goal for teachers in China. As with musicians whom I interviewed, true virtuosity involves not simply "technical wizardry," but also "heart." For teachers, this means that teaching requires mastering a technical (that is, knowledge) base, but the ideal is to be able to transcend that. (Paine, 1990,

page 54)

Paine identifies here two dimensions of the good teacher. First there is technical knowledge, that is, knowledge of texts. To be a virtuoso the teacher needs to be able to "play" the text, to know all sides and issues related to the text. Consequently the good teacher is well schooled in his subject matter. But subject matter knowledge is not enough, observes Paine. She quotes one expert teacher who emphasizes the teacher's obligation as a role model, in terms of subject matter, morals and political views. The "heart" is the second dimension in good teaching. It involves going beyond technical skill and knowledge to bring "a lyrical quality to the work" (page 63). It is the non-technical, human and moral component to teaching. The personal characteristics are important to the Chinese people and some universities try to take it into account when recruiting student teachers.

Paine (1990) observed master teachers in action. Their classes follow predictable patterns. Teachers start the class with a review and "inspection" of students' knowledge to see if they know yesterday's text. Once the teachers are satisfied with their students' knowledge they follow up with a presentation of today's text, taken, says Paine, directly from the curriculum text or textbook. Students repeat (depending on the subject matter) what the teacher says or practice in different ways, doing exercises or silent reading. Paine describes the manner in which the questioning of students takes places. Students stand up to answer teacher's questions. If they answer correctly they will be signalled by the teacher to sit down. If they answer incorrectly, they are not reprimanded, but remain standing until other students, called upon by the teacher, have provided the correct answer. No one is publicly criticized or reprimanded. Students are all treated equal and the same. There is no diversification of teaching styles.

Good teachers in China are like performers on stage and students are treated like audience. The good teacher moves and impresses his audience with his performance. Classes are large (between 50-70 students in a class), the teaching load is light (in terms of teaching hours per week) and there is no individualized instruction or group work. Paine notes that there seems to be a politicized view of children, that they are all equal, all able to learn, and need to be brought up to believe in the dominant role of the Communist party in Chinese society. The best teachers in China receive the title of "special rank." This group of teachers receive recognition in the form of bonuses, star status, notoriety, and recognition in terms of being called upon to advise others. The special rank teachers observes Paine, are distinguished by their sense of "special timing, .. elegance of language, (and) ... power of expression" (page 69).

The Good Teacher as Superman

We draw upon two sources for our portrait of the English ideas about the good teacher and good teaching. One source are the writings of Her Majesty's Inspectors (or the HMI). This group of practitioners are usually experienced teachers or school masters who travel the country and inspect teachers, teaching and schools. They publish reports that reflect ideas generally accepted by most of the inspectorate. The second source are English researchers and scholars (Broadhead, 1987; Hargreaves, 1989) criticizing or commenting on the HMI's writing. We recognize that in a multi cultural country like England, there will be many definition of goodness. We have chosen the HMI's portraits because this group of practitioners have explicitly addressed "goodness in teaching" and the "good teacher" in a range of publication and, moreover, it is their job to help teachers and school administrators to better their practice. The HMI's are essentially practitioners with authority and prestige and they usually maintain good contacts with schools. Yet, their reports are surprisingly devoid of empirical descriptions of what good teachers do in the classroom. The HMI's are more concerned with general descriptions of what **they** think is good practice and what good practitioners look like. We are assuming that these general descriptions are based on many years of practice in schools.

In a review of several of the HMI's publications, Broadhead (1987) identifies and describes an underlying model of good teaching. Hargreaves (1989) criticizes the same literature and suggests that the HMI consider goodness to cover dimensions: the **personal qualities** of the teacher, their **pedagogical skills** or technique, and **subject matter expertise**. Broadhead includes the same dimensions and adds another that to us captures the particular and traditional "Englishness" of the good teacher, namely, **professional behavior**. In brief, the model of the good teacher described by the HMI's is like that of superman: exceptional personal qualities, super command of pedagogical skill, exceptional subject matter background, and faultless conduct.

The HMI's place considerable emphasis on teachers' personalities in defining and describing goodness. These descriptions are detailed in The New Teacher in School. Good teachers have a natural talent, they are exceptionally confident about their ability to do their job, they are enthusiastic, perceptive, full of energy, they work extremely hard, have a good deal of common sense, are intelligent, and firm yet show adaptability towards their students, they are intuitive, and sensitive and friendly towards their students. All of this leads to excellent relations with students, their parents and the local community

which are all characteristic for the good teacher. Hargreaves (1989) notes that this description is "psychologistic" (page 75) and does not take into consideration how teachers understand, interpret and act on a daily basis in schools in all kinds of difficult situations.

The HMI's are less explicit about pedagogical skills. They only mention that good teachers control students and are able to make use of a repertoire of teaching methods. They are good planners and are able to engage in both long and short term planning. They are also able to help students develop listening skills. They can perceive and respond to individual differences, and incorporate unexpected event or interest among students into their lesson plans. Most importantly, they are effective and accurate in evaluating, not only students' performance, but also their own development and performance as a teacher.

The HMI's are explicit about subject matter expertise -- it is very important. The good teacher has a subject matter knowledge base that has both depth and breadth at the same time. Even though the HMI's do not describe the nature of this knowledge base, they mention that important elements in this area are the evaluation of curricular texts and other curricular materials, especially in relation to their own people. That is, an important part of subject matter expertise is matching curricular texts and students. The HMI's make demands on the good teacher integrating personal qualities into subject matter in that they say that one of the important characteristic of the good teacher is that she is able to incorporate relevant examples of personal experience into the curriculum and classroom life.

The special and unique "Englishness" of the good teacher in the HMI's descriptions appears in what they consider professional behavior. They expect the good teacher to be involved (without pay) in extracurricular activities, such as school sports and clubs (like the Duke of Edinburgh Award, Boy Scouts, and Girls Guides). Furthermore, the good teacher is unbiased, punctual, reliable and able to work with others.

The Good Teacher as a Skilled Performer

The American literature on the good teacher is extensive both in volume and coverage. We have chosen to focus on a small, but carefully selected, group of papers by researchers who describe what good teachers do in the classroom. Therefore, we base our portrait of the American good teacher primarily on the work of Kathy Carter, and Gaea Leinhardt and her colleagues, Hilda Borko and her co-worker, and Suzanne Wilson and her collaborators where they describe what their informants actually do in classrooms. Even though this criteria is critical to us, we find ourselves drawing on the influential work by Bob Yinger, and Carter and Berliner and their associates. While we recognize that in a multi-cultural society like the United States are, there will be many alternative portraits of the good teacher. We expect that some of the alternative portraits are be different from ours, yet all of the possible portraits are the product of American culture. We have only selected one small section of that culture to make our point that portraits of the good teacher are culturally biased.

The literature we have drawn upon for this American portrait of the good teacher is heavily influenced by cognitive psychology. Researchers talk about "expert" teacher rather than "good" teacher. They often use theories and concepts from this domain to define their unit of analysis, guide in data collection and in the interpret data. The concepts they use often remind us of stage performance. They talk about "scripts" and "scenes," (Leinhardt and Greeno, 1985; Leinhardt and Putnam, 1986) "improvisation" (Yinger, 1987). Wineburg and Wilson (1991) call the good teachers they studied respectively a "master performer" and a "choreographer." Judging who is a good teacher is usually based on standardized test scores, peer recommendation, principal's suggestion, and the researchers' visits to the teachers classroom prior to the actual fieldwork. Sometimes researchers make extra demands on goodness. Leinhardt (1986) wanted to study good teacher who taught under difficult conditions: in inner city schools in poor neighborhoods, depressed areas with high unemployment and many "difficult students." Leinhardt found Ms. Conway who's skilled performance as a math teacher helped her students score high on standardized tests.

The researchers describe in details what the good teacher does in the classroom. The important concepts are subject matter knowledge, or **pedagogical content knowledge, schema, script, agendas, and improvisation**. Good teachers know their subject matter in such a way as to be able to transmit it to students. It is a specialized way of knowing the subject matter (Shulman, 1987). It requires that teachers are able to generate explanations, illustrations, and representations of subject matter that their students understand (Baxter, Stein and Leinhardt, 1990). Schemas are knowledge structures that condense information about different kinds of cases and their relationships (Borko, 1989). It is efficient and enables teachers to assimilate new information quickly and effectively, and spontaneously. The script is also a knowledge structure that processes information about "familiar, everyday experiences" (Borko and Livingstone, 1989, page 475). The good teacher has a script to start the lesson, hand out papers, set up group work, or teach a unit. Agendas (Leinhardt and Greeno, 1986) are the plans that hold the activities together and give them a sense of purpose. These include a set of goals and a plan of activities that

keep the pace and students working.

The application of these activities in the classrooms of the good teacher is, of course, based on good classroom discipline. All the teachers in the research mentioned above were labelled as "good classroom managers," that is, they kept a good discipline in their classes and students working. The expert/novice studies (Borko and Livingston, 1990; Carter, 1985, 1986; Leinhardt, 1986) show that students who have good teachers spend proportionally more of their time on task than those who have novices as teachers.

The good teachers the American researchers describe are no robots. They are artists, and their art is based on solid craft knowledge and bold imagination. They are improvisors on stage. To improvise the teacher draws on a set of well rehearsed and practice skills, like that of their schemas, scripts, and agendas (Carter and Doyle, 1987). They do not follow a long script like an actor in a play. Instead, they arrive on stage with a set of "ideas" or "activities" that they want to do, and then activate these as needed. They are sensitive to the responses of their audience and are able to shift and change at the spur of the moment.

The Good Teacher as a Creator of a Nation

The particular uniqueness about the Israeli culture is that it is a nation in the making. Schools have been assigned the important task of transforming people from different cultures and background into "Israelis." All this is set against a background of political and unrest and uncertainty about the future. These issues inevitably characterize the Israeli conception of the good teacher. Goodness in teaching becomes more than a matter of mastering the curriculum.

Teachers are regarded in Israel to be responsible for transmit cultural knowledge to the younger generation. While this is considered an important task teachers are badly paid. When Israel was founded, teachers played a pivotal role in creating a national identity. It was their task to revive Hebrew and create a national language and national identity. Immigrants from 70 counties were transformed by teachers into Hebrew speakers and Israelis. This resulted in a high status for teachers because they were considered important in creating the Israeli nation. This has now partly changed. The demands on teachers are still high, both in terms of learning and transmitting a cultural identity. What has changed now is that their importance in cultural terms is not reflected in their pay checks.

Surving in an area of conflict and uncertainty about the future has made Israelis, both researchers and lay people, concerned about quality in education. Consequently, there is a rich data source on this topic. This literature includes both the views of professionals, who are concerned with theoretical issues: teachers, principals, teacher educators and researchers, and also lay people, who are concerned with reality: parents, politicians and journalists.

The "good teacher" in Israel has been pursued theoretically by researchers and teacher educators on the basis of an American model of cognitive and affective domains. Teachers at both elementary and secondary levels are expected to combine the cognitive (mastery of content and pedagogy) and affective (enthusiasm, sensitivity, making learning fun) aspects. Studies show that the cognitive aspect is emphasized first when relating to high school teachers, while the affective aspect is mentioned first when viewing elementary school teachers. Thus Giladi and Ben-Peretz (1981) found that different student-teachers' views of the ideal teacher varied: those studying to be elementary school teachers emphasized the affective factors and those studying to be high school teachers emphasized the cognitive aspect. However, Kremer-Hayon (1989), in her comparison of the views of Israeli student-teachers training for teaching in the elementary and junior high school, and their supervisors, found that student teachers emphasize the cognitive aspects, while supervisors tend to relate to pupils and affective variables most often. In keeping with this finding, Nir-Cohen (1983) found that Israeli elementary school principals rank the cognitive aspects as more important than the affective ones in listing characteristics of a good elementary school teacher. The second most important characteristic mentioned by principals was that the teacher be "viewed highly by parents and pupils." This indicates that principals feel that parents are more concerned with the cognitive aspects of schooling than the affective aspects. The question we want to explore is what parents and pupils expect of a good teacher, both in terms of his/her knowledge and personality, and in terms of the educational system as a whole.

Saabar (study in progress) interviewed 20 informants who were middle class mothers, school children, and high school students. This group of people identified three areas of goodness in teaching: **subject matter expertise, values, classroom management, and personality**. The informants, especially the mothers, emphasized the role of subject matter in good teaching. For them, subject matter depth and expertise was not enough, the good teacher knows ways to communicate her understanding effectively and clearly to students. She is creative, original, and not schematic. Teachers are not technicians, Saabar's informants tell her, they must be able to motive, create enthusiasm and a sense of adventure. Saabar's informants expect the good teacher to attend to values. They expect the teacher to help students cope with value laden societal concerns, from drug use to political and religious ideology. They see the

schools role as central in preserving the values of collectivism and egalitarianism in this age of pluralism, and the good teacher as the person who is able to take on and deal with these important issues.

The egalitarianism that characterizes Israeli society, observes Saabar, creates, along with the Talamudic tradition, one of the key problems in Israeli schools -- discipline. The lack of class divisions and formal labels often results in a mis-interpretation of democracy, a tendency, even if unconscious, to view students, parents, teachers and principals as equals. The Talamudic tradition of probing and deliberation characterized by answering a question with another question appears as arrogance and defiance on the behalf.

Israeli students and parents have expectations of the good teacher's personality. They expect the good teacher to look at her job as a vocation where she has invested her soul. She must show respect for her students, be sensitive, gentle, non-authoritarian, very flexible, and be "a bit of an actor."

All these expectations are set against low status of teachers and low salaries. Student teacher ration is high, 40 students in a class. A classroom incident illustrates this predicament. During a grammar lesson a teacher said to her class: "If I got a shekel for every mistake you make this year, I could double my salary." A student immediately retorted: "Oh, come on - doubling a teacher's salary is no big deal."

The Good Teacher as a Care Giver and Interpreter of Texts

Norwegian researchers and scholars have not been interested in identifying or describing the good teacher. It is not culturally acceptable in this egalitarian society to pick out individuals and say that they are better than others. The Norwegian language has a concept to describe this phenomena, "the Jante law." This "law" states that one should not consider oneself or anyone else is better than the rest. Consequently, there have been no empirical studies or scholarly discussions of good teachers in Norway. That does not mean that Norwegians do not know what a good teacher is like or what she does. The only source for the portrait of the Norwegian good teacher is an ethnographic study in progress (Gudmundsdottir, study in progress). Gudmundsdottir soon discovered that the teachers and administrators, in the school where the study is taking place, have very clear and consistent ideas about good teaching. The study focuses on the teaching of several secondary teachers at two high schools in Trondheim, Norway. One of the teachers, Hallgerd, will be used to illustrate the characteristics of the good teacher. Several good teachers have been identified in this study. Hallgerd was chosen for this paper because the other teachers have been used as examples on different occasions. Now, it is her turn. She is an excellent representative for the good teacher in Norway, because she embodies many of the characteristics teachers, researchers and lay people immediately and spontaneously recognize as belonging to the good teacher. The important characteristics of the Norwegian good high school teacher are **caring, pedagogical skills, and subject matter expertise**.

As is custom among Norwegian high school teachers, Hallgerd is qualified to teach two subjects. The study focuses on one of her subjects, Norwegian. She picks up her class in their first year and follows the class throughout high school, teaching the students all the Norwegian they learn in high school. This is common and expected of good teachers. They are expected to establish good and long term relationships with their students. Hallgerd usually takes on the role of homeroom teacher for one or more of her classes which enables her to be the kind of caretaker she aspires to be. There are on average 22 students in each class at her school and her teaching load is 17 hours (each teaching "hour" is 50 minutes) a week.

The caring role for the teacher is facilitated by school organization. There is a Norwegian word, "omsorg," for the kind of caring that is expected of the good teacher. This word carries a wider meaning, extending caring to caring attitudes, actions and organization. Almost all high schools in Norway operate on a class based system, where students stay with the same group for core subjects for all of the three years they are in the school. Each class gets assigned to a classroom where they take most of their classes. The teachers come to the classes, not vice versa. The school administration tries to schedule the teachers so that the group has the same teachers in the same subjects for all of the years they are in high school. At the end of three years a special kind of collegiality and friendship has developed among the students and their teachers. By then Hallgerd knows her students well. She uses this knowledge in her teaching. For example, when she teaches Norwegian dialects, she will say; "Per, you have family in this valley. How does your uncle say this word?" She is also able to accurately read signals from her students about how they feel. For example, when reading Gro's essay Hallgerd felt that the girl was more depressed than usual and decided to take some steps to help her. She further facilitates her caring role by speaking in her own dialect and encouraging her students to use theirs. Her manner and use of dialects create a kind of intimacy between her and her students that is characteristic of Norwegian families with a strong sense of cultural and historical roots. Students call her "Hallgerd" and a friendly and relaxed egalitarian spirit characterizes her classroom.

According to Hallgerd, to know in literature is to be able to interpret texts. To learn literature is

to engage in an activity that forces students to see beyond the plot. This view is the guiding light of her teaching methods. She will not stand there in front of the class and tell the students what the text means. That is bad teaching. In every class, Hallgerd, engages students in a range of activities. She lectures, organizes individual seat work and group work. During the 3 months she was observed she organized groups work of some kind in every class. She also gives assignments that require students to work in small groups outside of school. Each subject requires a different pattern. The unit on dialects requires the class listening to tapes and then working in pairs or individually on assignments. When teaching literature the pattern changes, also according to the literary work. For example, when teaching an 17th century satire, she organized the text into small units where students, working in small groups, analyzed the text and developed themes. On other occasions, with different texts, she goes the other way. She explains several themes and has students, working in small groups, trace the themes through the work.

Subject matter expertise is one dimension of the good teacher in Norway. It is common that teachers have masters degrees in one or both of the subjects they teach. Then their job title changes from "adjunkt" to "lektor" with appropriate pay increases. Hallgerd and her colleagues at school run a kind of in-house-in-service education program. They have a book club where members collectively buy books, pass them around (systematically) and then meet to engage in a literary discussion. The curriculum guideline in Norwegian literature is flexible and she is able to change texts students read for the exam. Her own knowledge of literature is both cognitive and affective. She knows how to interpret texts, but she also feels that if she is to teach it well she needs to "have a relationship with the text." She has had to teach texts she had no relationship with. It was difficult and boring until she found a way to make it more meaningful both to herself and her students.

In addition to these three dimension of goodness, the Norwegian good teacher is expected to be a good colleague. This is especially important in a small school like Nidaros Gymnas where Hallgerd teaches. Teacher turnover is low. Most teachers have been there for many years. Friendships develop and teachers mix socially. The staffroom is like a large comfortable living room where people meet informally and for work. New permanent jobs are few and sought after. High school teachers in Norway are well paid (relatively), have job security and carry high prestige in the community, and education is high on most people's agenda. No nation spends more money on each (primary and secondary) student than the Norwegians do. Hallgerd has been teaching for 22 years, 12 of those at Nidaros Gymnas. She claims that she has never once during her career thought about finding another job. Nidaros Gymnas, like most Norwegian high school are peaceful places without discipline problems. During one year of fieldwork at Nidaros Gymnas, Gudmundsdottir did not observe one instance of breach of discipline.

Discussion

While the portraits of good teachers in China, England, American, Israel and Norway are limited and biased, they, nevertheless provide some basis for a general comparison. The first issue that appears when comparing Chinese attitudes and expectations with our Western views of learning and students. In China "goodness" is to treat everyone equal and the same, and very little variation in terms of teaching methods. We, Westerners, appear from these portraits as individualists. Our good teachers are expected to master a range of teaching methods and have good relations with students. Our teachers are expected to reach each and every student in our class in one or the other way. Therefore, a range of teaching method repertoire is a given for the good teacher. Our Western model of the learner is supports this view: learning involves active reconstruction of knowledge. In China, learning seems more of an assimilation of the teacher's ideas. Under those circumstances, a repertoire of several teaching methods seem irrelevant.

The portraits show how one element of goodness is accepted as quality in one culture but becomes a liability in another. The Norwegian tradition of emphasizing dialects would not be acceptable in a high school in England or New England, USA. It is almost unthinkable for an English teacher in England to be talking, for example, in a Liverpool dialect to Cockney students and encouraging them to speak cockney. Or for an English teacher speaking with a rich Southern drawl to her students in New England. The same is with the idea of "egalitarianism." In Israel, it is considered a source for discipline problems, in Norway it is a way of creating a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

The American and Chinese portraits show a performer, one is a virtuoso the other is a master performer. The good teacher in these different cultures is on a stage and stage metaphors are used to describe what they do that makes them good. There is a script, a schema, and improvisation. But the comparison ends there. The American good teacher is concerned with keeping discipline and her students working on task working with assignments. The dimensions of expertise that American good teachers have are probably related to take individual differences into account, maintaining motivation, and getting through the textbook. The good Chinese teacher seems to proceed without much worry about student engagement or individual differences.

The comparison of the good teacher in these cultures reveals a curious fact -- the relationship

between the importance of the tasks society assigns it's teachers, good teachers and teachers in general, is in reverse to what authorities are willing to pay for the. There is a continuum with the biggest demands on Israeli and English teachers at one end, the Chinese in the middle, and American and Norwegian teachers at the other end of the continuum. Relatively speaking, the Israeli teachers are assigned the biggest task. They are working under extremely difficult conditions and their contribution to the creation of a nation is vital. The expectations on the English good teacher are a kind of invasion of privacy. Society, as represented by the HMI's expect her to work without pay free time (extracurricular activities) and be a "certain kind of person." The Chinese good teacher has also a task that goes beyond the classroom walls in that they are supposed to turn their students into "good communists." Recent events in China reveal that, either they did it so badly that they do not qualify to be good teachers, or they ignored this expectation. The American and Norwegian good teachers are just good teachers. They are not expected by society to do more than just that, teach, and teach well and with compassion. They are probably also best paid, in relative terms, of course.

Concluding Remarks

Portraits, like the ones we have made are always difficult and limited. Yet, they can have an important function to play. Comparisons can be made irrelevant by using alien categories. Comparisons are made difficult by using culture sensitive units of analysis. What is important and highlighted in one culture may not be relevant in another. Yet, it should not stop us from learning lessons from others. Cross cultural comparisons help us to look beyond the surface and can show us how different we really are.

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